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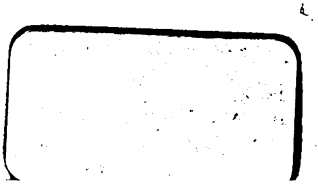

A REPORT

FROM THE

Lords Committees,

APPOINTED

To inſpect into the State of the Publick Offices of Record in this Kingdom, and in what Manner and Place the ſame are now kept: Made by the Lord Biſhop of *Ferns* and *Leighlin*, and agreed to by the HOUSE; On *Friday* the 30th of *November*, 1739: Which by Order of the HOUSE of LORDS, was laid before his GRACE the Lord LIEUTENANT, together with His GRACE's Anſwer thereunto.

Publiſhed by Authority.

DUBLIN:
Printed by GEORGE GRIERSON, Printer to the King's Moſt Excellent Majeſty, at the *King's Arms* and *Two Bibles* in *Eſſex-ſtreet*.
MDCCXL.

T O T

Die Mercurii 26. Die Martij, 1740.

IT is ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Report made by the Lords Committees appointed to inspect into the State of the Publick Offices of Record in this Kingdom, and in what Manner and Place the same are now kept, the 30th of *November* last, which by Order of this HOUSE, was laid before His Grace the Lord Lieutenant, together with His Grace's Answer thereunto, shall be forthwith Printed and Published, and that the Clerk of this House do appoint the Printing of the said Report and Answer.

En. Sterne, Cler. Parliamentor.

BY Virtue of the foregoing Order, I do appoint *George Grierson*, His Majesty's Printer, to Print the said Report and Answer, and forbid any other Person to Print the same.

En. Sterne, Cler. Parliamentor.

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REPORT

FROM

The LORDS COMMITTEES appointed to inſpect into the State of the Publick Offices of Record in this Kingdom, and in what Manner and Place the ſame are now kept: Made by the Lord Biſhop of *Ferns* and *Leighlin*, and agreed to by the Houſe on *Friday* the 30th of *November*, 1739: Which by the Order of the Houſe of LORDS, was laid before His GRACE the Lord Lieutenant, together with His GRACE's Anſwer thereunto.

My LORDS,

THE Lords Committees, though They could not be any way ſo well inform'd, of the State of the Publick Offices, as by viſiting the Principal of them.

(1) THEIR Lordſhips adjourn'd firſt, to the Rolls Office in the *Kings-Inns*; in which are kept, the Enrolments of all Grants, and Charters of the Crown, the Original Acts of Parliament, the Pleadings and Decrees of the High-Court of *Chancery*, and ſeveral other very valuable Records. Theſe Records they think to be of the laſt Conſequence, both to the Property and Liberties of the Nation. They could not therefore, without the utmoſt Concern, ſee them lodged in a Place, ſo expoſed to Accidents, which may utterly deſtroy them.

THE Lords Committees, found the whole Building of the *Inns*, in a decayed and ruinous Condition; and the Floors and Cielings of the Room, where the Rolls are kept, and of another Room, called the *Pleading-Office*, ſupported by Props. And the Clerk attending, inform'd their Lordſhips, That ſome Time ago, the Survey-or-General, or Perſons employ'd by him, to examine this Part of the Building,

found

found the Timber of it in many Places decayed, and the Ends of the Beams rotten, and ſtarted from the Walls; and the Whole in ſo dangerous a Condition, as to make theſe Props abſolutely Neceſſary, to prevent the Fall of the Floors. If any of the Props ſhould fail, or if a Defect in the Timber ſhould have paſs'd unobſerved; their Lordſhips think, there is great Reaſon to apprehend, that all the Records of this Office, would be buried in Rubbiſh, and many of them deſtroyed, or irretrievably defaced.

The Lords Committees found, ſeveral Rooms, in two Sides of the Building, inhabited by very low poor people. In theſe Rooms there are many Fire-places, the Hearths of which are narrow and broken, and ſome of them are raiſed above the Floor. There are alſo thin Deal-partitions, Straw-beds, and other combuſtible Stuff. If through the Careleſſneſs or Villany of theſe People, a Fire ſhould break out in any of their

Chambers; as there is a Communication between them, and the Office where the Rolls and Pleadings are lodged, their Lordſhips think, they would run a manifeſt Hazard of being burn'd to the Ground; And this Hazard they apprehend to be the greater, becauſe theſe *Inns* are reputed a privileged Place, tho' in Reality they are not; And the Inhabitants of theſe Rooms, are generally ſuch, as Drunkenneſs, and other Vices, have made Neceſſitous, who fly thither for Sanctuary from a Goal.

Besides this Danger from within, the Lords Committees obſerved, this Building to be very much expoſed to the Hazard of Fire, from the Houſes and Yards adjoyning; and their Lordſhips were informed, that within a few Years, two Fires have broken out very near it.

The firſt happened about Twelve Years ago, in an Houſe then inhabited by the Lady *Dunn*. The Houſe was burn'd to the Ground, and the *Inns* were

were preſerved, by blowing up a Stack of Cloſets, the Remains of which, ſhew the cloſe Communication they had with them: But, this Houſe having never been Re-built, there is at preſent no Danger from this Quarter.

. . . . . .

The other Fire happened laſt Summer. It began in *Church-ſtreet*, and burn'd ſome Houſes, which almoſt joyn'd the *Inns*; And between the Fire and the Rolls Office, there was only one Room, called the Rolls Chappel, the Timber of which has a Communication with that of the Office. The Clerk attending, informed the Lords Committees, That the Office was thought to be at this Time in ſo great Danger, that the Maſter of the Rolls, had made all neceſſary Preparations, for removing the Records. But by GOD's good Providence, the Fire was extinguiſhed, and they were a ſecond Time preſerved, as well from the Flames, as from that terrible Confuſion which a

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precipitate Removal of them, muſt neceſſarily have occaſioned.

THE Lords Committees obſerved new Houſes built on the ſame Ground, and as near the *Inns* as thoſe lately burned: They therefore think, that the Hazard of Fire from that Quarter continues. Their Lordſhips alſo obſerved, that the North-ſide of this Building, almoſt joyns *Pill-Lane*, a very cloſe Part of the City, where there are Publick Inns, and large Stacks of Hay: One of which they took Notice of, cloſe to an old Wall of the *Inns*, and appearing above it. The bare mention of this Situation, is ſufficient to point out the Danger of it.

FROM the *King's-Inns*, the Lords Committees, proceeded to inſpect the other Offices of Record, which they thought to be of greateſt Conſequence to the Nation; And ſome of them, they found in the cloſeſt Parts of the City, and in Lanes ſo very narrow, that their Coaches could

could not get into them. This Situation, their Lordſhips think to be extreamly inconvenient; becauſe in Caſe of a Fire, there is not Room either for Men to work, or Engines to play, to extinguiſh it. And all Attempts to remove the Records, would probably, for the ſame Reaſon, prove ineffectual.

THE *King's-Bench* Office is in *Schoolhouſe-lane*, one of narroweſt in the City of *Dublin*; the Clerk inform'd the Lords Committees, that about two Years ago, a Fire broke out very near the Office, which gave them a great Alarm: And there is now an old Cage-workhouſe, within ſo ſmall a Diſtance, as to make it's Situation very Dangerous.

IN this Office, are kept ſeveral Outlawries and Attainders; thoſe particularly of *Papiſts*, on Account of the Rebellions in 1641, and 1688. If theſe ſhould be burn'd, the Lords Committees fear, that the *Proteſtant* Poſſeſſors, would, at beſt, be expos'd to

to vexatious Law Suits, to Defend and Eſtabliſh their Titles to many forfeited Eſtates.

The Prothonotary of the *Common-Pleas*, has his Office in *Wine-tavern-ſtreet*: An old Cage-work houſe, now an Ale-houſe, joyns it on one Side, and the Beams of the Houſe on the other, are lodged in the Walls of the Office. At the back there is a Yard of about Ten Foot Square, entirely ſurrounded with Houſes, in any of which, or in the Office it ſelf, if a Fire ſhould break out, it would be ſcarce poſſible, to uſe proper Means to preſerve either Houſes or Records.

Another Office belonging to the ſame Court, that of the Keeper of the Writs and Chyrographer, is kept in *Bride-ſtreet*, in the Dwelling-houſe of the Officer; which, tho' ſomewhat better ſituated, than thoſe juſt mentioned, the Lords Committees do not think, to be as ſecure from Fire, as an Office of ſuch Conſequence to the Property of the whole Kingdom ought

ought to be: And the Clerk informed their Lordſhips, That by a Fire which broke out very near it ſome Years ago, the Office was in ſo much Danger, that he had all Things in Readineſs, for removing the Records.

In this Office, are the Writs of Covenants, and other Records relating to all Fines levied; And in the Prothonotary's Office, the Rolls of all common Recoveries ſuffered in this Kingdom: And, as Fines and common Recoveries, are the uſual Support, of Settlements, and Conveyances: If either of theſe Offices ſhould be burn'd, the Lords Committees are very apprehenſive, That many Purchaſers, for the higheſt Conſiderations, would be in Danger of loſing their Eſtates.

The Pleas Office of the Court of Exchequer is in *Caſtle-ſtreet*, where the Breadth of the Street, makes the Situation, in one Reſpect, leſs inconvenient. But Houſes joyn the Office on both Sides; and on one Side, there are

are ſome of Cage-work near it: On which Accounts, the Lords Committes, think it too much expos'd, to Accidents from Fire.

In this Office, and thoſe of the *King's-Bench* and *Common-Pleas*, are the Titles, of almoſt all the Judgment Creditors: The Lords Committees, beg leave to obſerve, to Your Lordſhips, that, Judgments being one of the common Securities of this Kingdom, the Deſtruction of the Records of any one of theſe Offices, would leave a Multitude of Creditors entirely at the Mercy of their Debtors.

The Office of the Chief Remembrancer of the Court of *Exchequer*, in which ſeveral Inquiſitions concerning Lands which belonged to Outlaw'd and Attainted Perſons, and all the Decrees, and other Proceedings in the Equity-ſide of that Court, are kept, is in *Kennedy's-lane*. At the Back, and on one Side, the Houſe ſtands open; but on the other, it joyns the Buildings of the Lane, which are ſo cloſe,

cloſe, and the Lane is ſo extreamly narrow, that ſhould a Fire break out in any one Houſe, it would probably extend itſelf to them all.

THE Lords Committees, are unwilling to take up more of Your Lordſhips Time, with particular Remarks on other Offices. But they beg leave to inform Your Lordſhips, that except the Offices belonging to Parliament, the Council and Regiſtry Offices, and ſome others, which are kept within the Precincts of the Caſtle of *Dublin*, they have not found one, the Situation of which, is in their Opinion, ſafe and commodious. And their Lordſhips ſee this with the more Uneaſineſs; becauſe this Kingdom, has already in one Inſtance, felt the Evil, which there is ſo great Reaſon to fear in others. The Damage ſuſtained by the Fire, which ſome Years ago conſumed the Council-Office, can never be Repaired.

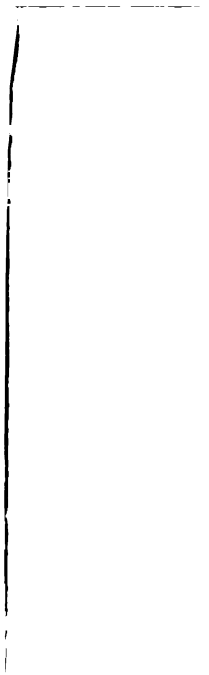
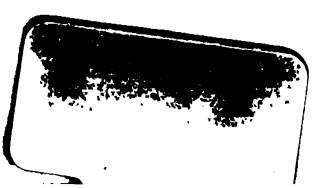
THE Lords Committees think it their Duty, upon this Occaſion, to obſerve

observe to Your Lordships, That all the Offices, except those of Parliament, the Rolls, and those in the Castle of *Dublin*, are kept in private Houses, hired by the Officers; by which Means, publick Records, which concern the Property of the whole Kingdom, are lyable to be Distrained for Rent: And upon the Death of the Officers, they must for a Time be entirely in the Power of their Heirs or Executors, who, should they prove Corrupt or Negligent, might, in a few Hours, destroy a Multitude of them.

THEIR Lordships beg leave to add this short Observation; That these Offices are dispers'd thro' the several Parts of this great City, which they think to be very inconvenient, both to the Suitors and the Practitioners in the Courts.

Die Veneris 14. *Die Decembris*, 1739.

THE Lord Chancellor acquainted the Houſe, That in Obedience to their Lordſhips Order of the 30th of *November* laſt, He attended His Grace the Lord Lieutenant, with the Report agreed to by this Houſe, in Relation to the Publick Offices of Record, and His Grace was pleaſed to give this Anſwer,

I Am very ſenſible of what Importance the Preſervation of the Publick Records is to this Kingdom, and ſhall forthwith lay this Report before His Majeſty.

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